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Eric Scott Fisher

What motivates us to create? To write? To paint? Why do we do it? Does it help us to put our world into perspective? Is it a vehicle for speaking to God? Or to question Him? Is it a quest for Truth? After all, there is no Blood thicker than Ink.

We are like gods. We who create. We hold whole worlds in our hands. We are sub-creators. We take out our pens or our brushes and say with a loud voice, "Let there be light!" And there is light.

Art is maybe that. Light in a gloomy world. A way to reach others and to communicate ourselves. To not feel so alone. It is Vision. It is Insight. Clairvoyance. Premonition. Prayer, and Thanks. Love and Faith. Hate and Anger. Confusion. Thought. Bliss and Denial. The willingness to survive and be brave enough to question what it means to WANT to survive. What is it all about? Why does it seem that to live in the world is to be damned by God, but to live for God is to be damned by the world?

How did it all start, where does it end, how do we fit in, and is there any reason to go on? Are we alone, after all, even among ourselves? Have we no purpose? Have we no meaning? Is there no hope and is death really the end? To say nothing. To think nothing. To cease to Be. Will our questions never be answered? What is the right way to die?

Is this all there is?

Is there nothing more?

We have sung our last song. We have danced the last dance. It's time to go home now, we have closed the door and blown out the candle.

Our lives are like questions desperately seeking an answer.

Steve Sievers

The blank sheet stares across the open world. The future remains unknown. It may take the path most commonly chosen, and become a common follower. Or maybe it will be a gift brought upon and cherished with wisdom to enlighten the universe with its vivid knowledge and creativity. But this decision rests solely on you, the writer.

The Writer's Block

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Erica Coffey

The round
mass of confusion
that we somehow
coexist on
is taken for
granted every
day

Talent or Curse?
Erica Gallagher

Talent or curse?
Better or worse?
Pen, paper, mind and hand
Trying to communicate so you'll understand
A poet's mind is like a rich lady's purse.

Fantasy or fact?
Gained or lacked?
An empty room
    becomes a writer's plantation
To put to use an uncharted imagination
Which can't be contained or tracked.

Literal or figurative?
Citizen or fugitive?
A poet lives a million lives in one great mind
And is able to share them and still find
A million more lifetimes to live.

Tell A Little
Matt Furlane

Tell me a little.
I will not interrupt.
Pass on a little.
Just some knowledge.
My life was before me
while you were dodging death.
My cereal tasted sweet
while your experience tasted bitter.
I ran and jumped through the house
while you were sitting in the rain.
But I am now older. I want to know.
Do not leave it to the movies
Do not leave it to the self-righteous.
Do not let your story die.
Do not let your experience wither.
Do not let your knowledge fade away.
Pass it on to us so we may know more.
So we may remember.
So you may live.

Babble
Jeff Hicks

why do I sit and write
    when the words fly by so quickly
that the time and effort given makes not time to get the words on the page.
Or to even dot my I's?

Carrie, Before and After
Cynthia J. Boyne

Most mornings, I look in her room and just smile. How happy I am to see her. Sometimes I go in and lie beside her. She wakes smiling, covers me, and puts her arms around me. What wonderful moments we have now. However, only a few short years ago, life was not so sweet.

Carrie is my fourth child. She was a beautiful and healthy baby, but was born into a disruptive divorce atmosphere. She had neither father nor mother to give her the love and at-

tention she deserved and needed. It was necessary for me to become the provider by working a twelve hour day on construction. The ground rule for Carrie's life was predisposed; fight for your life; hence, she did exactly that. Through preschool into high school, her behavior was a continuous and progressive pattern of rebellion.

In preschool and kindergarten, she defiantly refused to take naps and ripped up all her papers; in addition, she destroyed the property of others. While attending a Catholic grammar school, she faced expulsion for disrupting the class and causing bodily harm to the boys. Transferring her to a public school, I prayed things would be different. Within three months, Carrie and I were called to the school for a conference. The teachers could no longer handle her disrespect and disruption of the classroom. They wanted my permission to administer corporal punishment (spankings). I refused. The school accepted my commitment to more counseling. She and I went home and cried. High school was worse. Detentions, suspensions, ditching, poor grades, and drinking were the order of the day. At home, it was more of the same.

She fought with her siblings and destroyed their property. When angry with me she destroyed her room and would write words of hate on her chalkboard; such as 'I hate you' or 'I wish you would die.' One time, I went on a retreat for some peace and quiet. I arranged to have all of my children stay at a safe place; nevertheless, I discovered later she had broken a window, entered the house, and had a party.

She had no respect for anyone or anything. She continued to ridicule me for spending money on counseling for her. Through all these years, I made attempts at parenting classes, tough love groups, read books on discipline, but still chaos prevailed. She was older and more destructive. I was getting weaker and felt something bad was going to happen. I purchased another counselor.

This time was different. Carrie's counselor helped me realize I could do no more. I must let her go and be responsible for herself. Reluctantly, I withdrew all the rules of the house. She could do as she pleased, except destroy the house. Carrie was suspicious, yet thrilled; however, within two weeks, she begged me for rules. This was the first sign of progress. She had begum to change.

She pulled it together enough to graduate from high school. She wanted to go away to a junior college. I disagreed but relented. I agreed to help her financially as long as she worked and maintained a "C" average. The first quarter was borderline. The second was touch and go, and go she did. Over the next couple of years she took an average of 16 hours per semester, obtained a scholarship in softball and made the dean's list several time; furthermore, she worked a part-time job.

Our relationship has grown into a mother's dream. Over the years, I visited her at college on a regular basis and was treated like her best friend. I often came straight from work, dirty and tired. She would lay clean clothes out for me and prepare my dinner. We slept together in a twin bed and laughed most of the night.

Carrie is a senior at Governors State University and lives with me now. She tells me I am the best roommate she has ever had; in a like manner, I feel she is the kindest and most supportive person in the world to me. She is best friends and advisor to her brothers and sister; moreover, she is one of the most respected members of our family, not to mention the funniest.

I don't know what made Carrie change. She attributes her change to me. The fact that I never gave up on our relationship and insisted on counseling. I believe a Higher Power stepped in to give her the chance at life she never had. She has a wonderful and gifted spirit, and I feel privileged to be part of her life.

Looking In from the Outside

Lissa M. Joachim

She is a normal, every day variety sort of person. She has thoughts and feelings like anyone; one she freely shares, the other she keeps hidden from sight and intuition. Being no-one remarkable, she goes along her life, reluctant to invite people in but won't hesitate if they ask.

Her talents aren't anything she counts special. If she likes it, whether or not she's good at it, she does it. She sings like a choking cow, but keeps singing. Even while being complimented, she insists her sketching is merely passing and could use a lot of improvement, but she keeps drawing. Many have criticized her writing, but she keeps writing in hopes that, one day, she'll get better. Her affinity for the old and even ancient skills make some people think she is strange, but she still wields a quarterstaff with an "almost deadly" accuracy and casts her Rune stones and cards to glimpse the future.

She's a touching sort of person. She loves hugs and being held, but that doesn't mean she's loose. It may make her look like a tease when she goes so far before stopping but she has her own set of morals and she sticks to them. To her, touching is a way of expressing herself and her feelings. If she hugs or kisses you, it means nothing more than she likes you.

Refusing to call herself a women's libber, she thinks women should be equal and earn as much money and honor and respect as their male counterparts if they want to. She'd be equally as happy being married and pregnant for the rest of her life as she would being a successful business woman at the peak of her career. To her, it's no more than a matter of personal choice.

The more you get to know her, the stranger she may seem. She speaks in Elvish, writes in Runes, and is fond of fairies and goddesses. She believes in the unseen and the unknown. She questions her baptized religion like most people, only she chooses to believe in something that's right for her. She's not atheistic or Satanic, merely questioning, wondering why she was taught to fear a God supposed to be loving and merciful. And her questions have led her to choose her own path and follow what she feels is right. Rather than worrying about the past or future, she stays in the Now, in the present.

She loves, laughs, cries, and hates with the rest of humanity. She doesn't care what you think of her and wishes to be friends with everyone, regardless of what society deems as making us different.

She's not perfect. She has bad days and holds grudges. Jealously and alienation (of herself and others) aren't unknown to her. Not everyone is her friend and she does have enemies, though it does not make her happy.

She has goals and she has dreams. And she often lives in her own little world. She's been hurt and disappointed and betrayed. Likewise,

she's been loved and blessed. She's human and, therefore, tends to ramble on, like now. But, looking in the mirror in front of her, she likes what she sees, knows that she likes herself, and hopes that you come to like her too.

Untitled
Anonymous

Water runs hot
Water runs cold
He proclaims his love to me,
yet his affection is not shown.
He desires my time, then I
wait pacing by the phone,
wondering where he is,
wishing he was home.

Untitled
Kirsten Honiotes

When I confessed my love for you

you shot me

with careless aim you killed me

coldly

brutally

stomping out the flame

which once brought me such warmth

Oh Prized Virginity!
Anonymous

Please touch me
so I will know what gray eyes hold
lust or greed for unspoiled territory?
The boy and girl locked together in a field -
Beat after beat, the boy climbs as
the girl recedes into unexpected pain.
She enjoys the rhythm,
like a tribal drum beating through her,
and she loves the boy -
he enjoys getting laid.
Searching through the rubble
the boy finds a shoe. The girl finds
her heart ground into the dirt.

Suspicion
Kirsten Honiotes

I caught you
with your eyes on her
scoping, grabbing, groping
no more than skin-deep
yet still your mind was hoping
If I had asked
"What are you looking at?'"
Would you have answered
"Nothing"?

Alex

Jason Stone

When will it be,
that I will see,
A reflection of me
or a light blue sea.
In my hands I hold,
the darkness and the cold,
I will never be too old,
and never fear death's hold.
The mornings hours I sleep
since the night buried deep,
The sun is gone, I make my leap,
a mortal's life, I reap.

Steve Sievers

I hate what I love,
and I don't love you.
I try hard to forget to remember.
Everything is nothing.
Too important to go on.
Too beautiful to make sense.
So confusing it's clear.
I couldn't tell you but instead,
A meaningless meaning to the end.

Lissa M. Joachim

When the moon shines full on me,
I let the power wishing me free.
With candles lit and shadows deep,
Through colored threads, the magic creeps.

With full intent, purpose, and love
Witnessed by the stars above,
I shape my world by strength and will.
Within loving hands, my heart beats still.

In perfect love and perfect trust,
I surrender my heart, soul, and lust.
Created by my mind,
    brought forth on my whim,
Show him my heart and let him in.

Erica Seversen

Love eats you whole.
Infesting your mind with thoughts of him,
shivers rack your body with lust for him,
so tears come and tears fall
    all for want of him.

Later, after love has taken its last erotic bite,
the lover must reflect on the lack of fight
she raised against the stealing of her soul
Love eats you whole.

Wondering While Wandering

Kevin Davisson

Recently it seems that the thought of being married in the future makes me feel sick. Actually, it's not so much the thought of marriage that makes me feel ill (well, the thought of an expensive religious wedding does make me feel queasy), it's the thought of living away the rest of my life in suburbia, working five days a week, mowing the lawn on Sundays, house payments, car payments, block parties, wearing clothes that the neighbors will be sure to accept me in, playing the role of handyman around the house, and eating a nice dinner every night...and what really makes me feel like falling to the floor and spilling my stomach is the thought of having kids; raising them, indoctrinating them with my beliefs, sending them to school, making sure that they do the "right" thing, and taking them on vacations to tacky family getaways, whilst wearing family man attire.

That's only one scenario...each one I run through my mind has an equally nauseating effect. How am I supposed to find some kind of purpose in all of this? Sometimes the thought of being alone for the rest of my life makes me feel less ill than the thought of having a wife and much less ill than that of having a family. How does everyone do it? Are they really drones, doing what is expected and what they've been striving for since they've been old enough to have someone else's ideas implanted in their heads or do they have access to some great secret that fits the mundane and expected into some cosmic, grand scheme of things?

Where can I find this secret? I'm sure some people have their own meaning-of-life secrets. When can I find mine? Should I become a family man and get a secure job in some field that I have no interest in making a career out of? (I do not see myself wanting to make a career out of anything for a long time...I really can't see myself having the capability to choose a major within the next several years...this is not a refusal to grow up, it's a refusal to commit...wait, those may be pretty closely related) Or in the short term, should I do what's expected of me by taking up drinking beer, watching football, basketball, baseball, and all of the hilarious sitcoms that are a must among the youth? Should I have a widely acceptable style of dress? Should I rush out to movie theaters to see all the latest clones in all of the newest trends of the motion pictures, and be entertained by them? Should I find a lot of advertising funny, witty, totally unbothersome, and sometimes downright cute?

And what the hell am I talking about? I do some of the things I'm whining about here. I don't want to put down anyone that does these things. They should do whatever is right for them, and I'll do whatever is right for me. But, I guess I don't know what's right for me, and I want a way to rationalize these behaviors to myself. I doubt I'll find my answers living in this geographical area the rest of my life; I need to get the hell out of Dodge and find some new experiences.

I've taken to wondering if prejudice and closed-mindedness are side effects of aging. Am I going to be a lot of old guys I meet? I don't want to dress and speak according to what I perceive as respectable and frown upon those that are not as respectable as I. Is getting old going to change these thoughts in my head? I don't want to preach. I don't want to expound on why I'm right, and why those that don't agree with me are morons. I don't want to exchange stories with my wife or friends prov-

ing that we are, in fact, the only people left on this planet that do any work in our respective offices; no one else does a thing; we keep our companies running; stories about why people are just not as good and moral as we are. Fuck morals. I don't want them. Everyone has a different perspective and do mostly what they see as right; why can't we respect that nobody is wrong? (Now I'm preaching absolutism, even if they are mostly relativistic absolutes.)

I don't want to become old and die without having lived for something, and I doubt that I ever will, but hopefully I'll keep looking until I'm a prejudiced, crotchety, closed-minded, old asshole. Now I'm becoming the old man I don't want to be; I'm preaching my "correct."

Wedding Dress

Karen Henning

white satin, lace,
chiffon,
sequins, beads,
pearls,
high neck, low waist,
long train, flowing veil.

find it, try it
fit it

soft skin,
smooth curves,
sleek back,
flowing hair.
know it, use it
be it.

I.denver Magenta

Maryland church bells.
Scandal hides in virgin white;
fainthearted and lost.

An Orange Rose for Sarah

Scott Bick

She will never forget.
She will never forget.
That orange rose I gave to her
still blossoms like a child.
Thoughts convey the same reminiscent past.
Simple like, I wish I could go back.
Wish I could go back
When I gave that orange rose to Sarah.
The flower that transgressed time
and became a part of forever.

That orange rose, I never saw again.
Only the future remains
to flourish out of my past memories
When I gave the orange rose to Sarah.

Alice's Stiletto
Erica Gallagher

No need to speculate
How it pried into her heart
With fresh plasma leaking out
She is the Kitchen Queen
Too conservative to be speaking out.
No need to wonder
How dinner was always prepared on time
Or how she got it perfect for all those years
She took pride and confidence
    in that service
The dishes so clean, your reflection appeared.
No need to mourn
The suicide of my favorite maid
She wasn't a victim of the nuclear family
She was the survivor of a television show
That made the rest of the world look ugly.

A Riddle
Matt Furlane

Sometimes a curse, sometimes a blessing,
    It is often found
    where those are confessing.
In times of war it can be threatening,
    Sometimes its pleasant,
        sometimes maddening,
    It cannot be heard
        though described as deafening.
Partner to night, light, and sacred grounds,
    Annoyed by chatter, clatter,
        and other sounds.

Untitled #3
Jeff Hicks

no time
to define
a timeline
in which to align
this rhyme

My Favorite Intruder
Kirsten Honiotes

On hot afternoons where time permits
I hide in my garden and pray for a glimpse
of my favorite intruder
whose visits so brief
that it boggles my sight
and brings disbelief.
He comes unannounced,
just one look and he's there
glistening like a gem suspended in air.
His collar is scarlet and then opalesque
a luxurious trim for his formal grey vest
He's frantically fickle yet
moves with such grace
He's hopelessly curious
inspecting my place.
He sings a soft melody
so sweet to my ears
then almost magically he disappears.

To the One

Erica Gallagher

To the one who held me in his hand
And filtered me like a grain of sand
Straining out my natural flaws
Without trying to understand
That I take pride in my cause.

To the one who held me in high esteem
And dared me to live out my dream
Pushing and pushing until I did it right
Can I ask you, how well do I seem?
I'm not the person you led to the light.

To you who snickered and went on by
And thought I'd never ask you why
Today I don't know and I don't care
But I will find out before I die
In death I will find my answers there.

I.denver Magenta

Bottom lines___
lines neath
under them
Could lines be lying?

Top of the line?
- always lines underneath-
We are all
lying in lines
aligned
with
stars.

Carla Swinke

Bitterness crosses my lips
and carries me across the wilderness.
Lost and alone is how I travel.
A silent world is where I live.
Ignorant words are whispered about me.
They do not know how they hurt me.
Let me be free from this sad, sad desert.
I want to float upon the river of love
with oars of passion to move me along.
Am I a lost soul that stands still,
or do I move so fast
that no one sees me?

Untitled Emotion

Erica Severson

To say "I Love" is false,
I pity loves warped fame,
but lust is thriving.
Tight young men cruise by and I
act disinterested with half-opened eye,
but it's just a clever ruse to
mask the animal frustration.
Oh, my lust is alive. A pair of lips
discover my body, slithering through
my perspiration. I champion this
feeling- and give way to ecstasy, to joy.
So if you believe lust to be a
shallow emotion, not worthy of such
To say "I Love" is false.

Fill in the Blank

Steve Sievers

My emotions grow empty
when I think of her.
She is out there,
somewhere
She has a destiny,
without me,
Yet still dream for her fading love,
And I wonder if she remembers me.
Soon,
My attitude grows dark,
and life gets careless.
I don't worry about her,
existence.
I don't reason with,
the world.
And I am locked inside
    a state of depressed rage,
That I will never ever figure out.

Erica Coffey

Insignificant
I feel
in a world
of skyscrapers, mountains
bridges and seas.
What can I do,
just little ol' me?
I want to be important
I want to be known
I want to shine
I want to be shown
how I can have
significance,
how I can be the one
to change the world;
to unshackle the hearts
of the cold and set them free,
to bring about beauty
in this world of anger,
hate, cynicism and poverty.

I.denver Magenta

Soft spoken is grace;
Full and becoming.
tarnished by high,

    school soaps:hearts
Don't gossip.
            thoughts did persevere
            perceived in a notion
            - per se-
    of constant motion toward
a confrontation.

Dreamspeaks, Wishwhispers, and Other Catastrophes (Untitled II)

Lissa M. Joachim

I stand alone and still in a moving sea of people I don't know. There is uncertainty and fear of the unknown in my mind, yet the atmosphere, the very air, is charged by love, faith, and acceptance. Open-mouthed and wide-eyed with awe, I watch as people around me begin to move, sing, clap, proclaim, and love. I have a hard time understanding what is going on about me and questions begin to well up in my heart like the tears in my eyes. Questions that have no answers; doubts. It's all so very beautiful and so very foreign. Such wondrous, accepting love and joy and the free sharing of it is alien to me. I'm invited to join in but I don't know how. My heart trembles at the thought of bleeding so openly, showing my secrets and pain for all to see. But my heart overpowers my mind and I let my soul lead the way. And never before have I felt so free...

Metamorphosis

Kirsten Honiotes

Weathered by storms
hot days
cold nights
painful memories
my cocoon grows weak
and I wait for the dying moment
when I can break free
and spread my wings.

The Boy Who Loved Chocolate

Steve Sievers

The hormonal balance was great,
Love has never hurt so bad.
With remarks of power and contention,
passed down through generations.
Dominance, hunger, and greed,
layered in raging tension and lust.
I have become the beast,
    when I live with the rest.
Thoughts of will-raping screams,
fortified by horrid laughter.
I cannot escape the living chapters,
of human ignorance
    and testosterone disasters.
Beyond these blood-stained sheets,
and even cries of pleasure.
I never knew love could be so unsexual.
I never knew life
    was love's greatest treasure.

Time Flies

Jeff Gilleland

Treated like such a whore
Wish I had more
Too much can become a bore
Unlikely to be stopped
Certainly not dropped
A picture which cannot be cropped
Try to unwind
My sagging behind
It's only the blind
Leading the blind

Cheryl Elwell

once i was
a queen
powerful and alone

once i was
a peasant
sad and enslaved

Once I was
an indian
Wild and Free

now i am
nobody
born centuries too late
stuck in this dreary life
of yester-years

Electric Company

Erica Gallagher

Oh no!
What if I don't make my parents proud
What if I can't live up to
The things they want me to do
Or the expectations I am asked to meet
I am just an excuse not a reason
So confused as to my mission
Like bleach in colored clothes
I really fucked things up
Now what?
I am worried, it's too late
I got a bad case of being bad
All up in a ball
Crunched up in nervous matter
In need of shock treatment
Or a new 60 watt bulb in my head
Screwed in tight this time
Screwed in tight this time
May I'll see the light this time.

Souls

Susan Sink

If you ask me what the soul is like
I will tell you it is open,
not the tight fist of a heart,
though once I saw two swans
on a small pond sleeping:
the even, winged chambers of body,
long, arterial necks relaxed back,
each beak tucked under a folded wing,
and knew:
if the soul is like the heart
it is a white, feathered heart on water.

Erica Coffey

Walking in the narrow
Line between two worlds
Struggling within
About the world outside
Can't decide to
Dive into either
Don't want to lose one
Or the other
Stuck between
Me and myself

True Faith

Jeff Hicks

mental agnostics:
believing not in what they think
but only what they believe they are thinking

Question

Karen Henning

Today's sermon had me thinking
about Eve and Adam's time in Eden.
They had free will and nature's buffet
but what was it that drew them away?
How would I fend in such a state?
God knows no heed would I give snake.
Without second thought, I know very well
to the tree of knowledge I'd run like hell.
And eat to see what was prohibited me.
A sinner am I, no better than they,
but someday maybe I can ask Eve, "Hey-
Grandma, would you do it the same
if you could go back again?"

The Wind Chime Sonnet

Kirsten Honiotes

As I sit here reading
my wind chime strikes up conversation
a diligent dance she's leading
as she interrupts with intonation
softly at first she speaks in pitch
then gradually becomes frantic
out of control she begins to twitch
she's hopelessly romantic
There's something profound
she's trying to convey
with each ringing sound
she continues to play
I sympathize with her bouts of anguish
and wish I could understand her language

Night Life
Rebecca Lafond

Night, thy soul keeps breath;
Linger, night
Linger, life.
Shadowy, silvery, sliver of moon
Balancing on thy fingertip.
Crest of light
Sinking,
Swooning,
Sadness.
Night, thy sole splendor keeps breath.

Ambivalent Motherhood
Kirsten Honiotes

As I felt a tear roll down my cheek I remembered that painful morning watching my oldest daughter entering that old building on her first day of Kindergarten. No longer was she my precious baby-doll but now society's "little darling" and I merely her bearer. From that day on she became forever indebted to school, work, and clinging to the rungs of civilization's ladders. However, today as that big orange monstrosity screeches to a halt in front of my home, I cry not because I am losing a child but because the little monsters are home for the summer.

Changes Of Weather
Matt Furlane

Asphalt parking lots reflect rolling waves of
Heat thousands of motors convert fuel into
Kinetic energy and carbon monoxide thick-
Ening an already thick soup. the air stifling
Smothering menacing hangs heavy like a
Drenched cloth. it remains firm, motionless
As an actively suppressing curse. there is
Only one cloud spread thin as rice paper
Over the entire sky letting in light keep-
Ing in the heat animals lie still waiting for
Darkness and the light of the moon. people
Move about under duress murmuring against
The wretched invisible tyrant cursing angrily
As their blood becomes hot conjuring raging
Thoughts as air conditioners fail and relief
Becomes just another thin imaginary desire.

Like a hand looming in the heavens
About to sweep away all that is evil
Dark clouds rumble in the distance
Putting fear into the lazy air that is settled
before it
Leaves rustle in excitement anticipating
the long awaited deliverance.
Its sweep is steady thunderous rolling as
Fingers of electricity
Pierce the tyrant
With-Quick-Strikes.

Darkness falls
And blinding light sporadically
FLASHES

As millions of drops of water
Speed
Toward
Earth
Roaring softly in unison
As they celebrate
A change in the weather.

Sunset Recalled

Lyubov E. Mir

The sky turns to fire
And I think of another place
Another time
Another life, with you.
The grass and buildings fade
The palm trees and moonlit water
As the purple-hued horizon
Bends down to touch the waves.
I feel the same heat on my skin
As when we sat together
In the rosy glow of the fading sun.
I remember thinking we could live forever
As I blithely ignored tomorrow
As the peaches turned to violets
As the violets turned to blues.
I look across the trees
Awash in vivid orange
And try to see the palm leaves.
I hear the roaring of the traffic
My substitute for waves
I sit and think of might-have-beens
My substitute for you.
The roses pass to purple
The purples pass to dusk
The fire passes to darkness
Like it did so long ago.
We watched it pass together
Pass into memories, like us.
Recalled by a brilliant glow
Fire flaming like we might have
And then I look to see
The fiery glow is gone
And with it pain and memories
Fast fading into night.

Paradise lost

Cheryl Elwell

I sat and waited for the day,
when flowers die and smiles fade.
When glasses crash and masks fall,
when human eyes pain to see
When the time has come.
No more planning. No more waiting.
When the music stops.
Rush the wall
Branches and thorn fingers scratch
and slow me.
Stones, try to stop me.
Yet over I go. Down I come
into the place of the unknown
Great fists thundering.

Roar the Ocean
Trumpets in my ears,
Fill my head,
and overwhelm my soul

The wet sand beneath me,
soft water tongues lapping at my side,
Belittled human pride
washed away in the cool ocean tides
Gold silk, rippling flat in the wind
Rainbow skies flaring up.
Graceful foam fans rising.
Mysterious power
and immeasurable beauty
Where heaven touched Earth.

paradise

Hazy,
sleepy,
awake,

Mists

David Roundtree

Across this softly undulating land
(our legacy of long forgotten glaciers)
in a dream of wispy silhouettes
as Father Sun sleeps well below
Earth's unseen, distant edge
and long before he fans his first red rays
pale mists arise
from plants, small ponds, and streams
and, in still silence,
hover over all their recent
earthbound incarnations—well above,
as though denied so much
as one fond farewell touch
of all they had been such
a vital part of.

Each is individual—
a lovely, fragile variation
on a haunting theme.

Before the rising Sun
they glow bright crimson, bronze, or gold
or any of a host of hues
whose names we need not know
for under unforgiving glare
too soon all turn to nothingness
and are forgotten.

Cheryl Elwell

dawn breaks,
Ocean tides crumble, mountains crash
body stirs.
heart breaks,
soul returns,
body wakes,

a spark, a flame
wisp of smoke rising
Ocean tides crumble, mountains crash
Soul sighs
then commands the Body to rise

Untitled 2
C.L.McAllister

I fear the path of my reality
So I take a trip on the boat of dreams
And sail away from it all

Untitled
Kim Vogen

back and forth—we just drift
    wherever the wind takes us
never knowing
just dancing leaves
    on the circus floor
the uncertainty used to frighten me
    but now i realize it's a path i need to take
then i understand
and when I don't,
    i know that someday i will
because the leaves are so calm
and they make a beautiful picture
    making love to the earth
and love just flows
down a path as it should
hold my stare so that i do not fall
tell me you are proud
fluttering leaves among the ground,
yet one is encaptured to dance with the wind
one so special we all stop to notice
let that one be me
i want to dance
let me play
the freshly fallen leaves can learn to fly too
when you let me fall,
don't forget
that i may be the one to be caught
    and whisked away
someday i will fly too

Blur
Kevin Davisson

John walked briskly down the dark street, splashing water from the recent storm. His automobile had broken down a couple of blocks back and there weren't any cabs in sight. He had taken a look under the hood too, but John didn't know the first thing about cars.

He committed this spot of the street to memory so he would know where he had left the car. He noticed the ugly, tattered buildings which feebly shot into the air, pointing at the charcoal storm clouds. The only illumination on the block came from a couple of streetlights, which shed an eerie orange color on the fog-like mist swirling around them. A momentary gust of wind blew John's overcoat up around him, revealing a handgun tucked in his belt, glistening from the streetlight. He usually kept it in his glove box, just to be prepared for any surprise that might require it. He didn't think

he was being paranoid; because it made him feel safe, he kept it on him. Safe from all of the people he saw in the newspapers and on television every night.

He began heading west down the street. Why was this place familiar? John knew that he'd never passed through this part of town, but he couldn't shake the feeling that he'd walked down this street before. He stopped and glanced around. After a few seconds he dismissed it and continued walking. His body moved in and out of the shadows at a brisk pace. His hair and clothes were now damp from the foggy mist. John stopped again. There was an odd stillness. He suddenly felt extremely alone.

He looked up and down the street but saw absolutely no signs of life. Nobody was coming or going. He slowly gathered a few steps. The only noises John could hear were the humming of the streetlights and his footsteps.

A woman strolled out of a building ahead of him and shared the sidewalk with John, keeping herself about 10 feet in front of him. Her perfume hit him like a wall. It wasn't that she had doused herself in it; he felt as if he had some intimate knowledge of her. He wanted to spend the rest of time strolling down this length of concrete with her, without ever exchanging a word. Words always seemed to fuck things up. She arrived at her car and disappeared behind the tinted glass. She sped away.

Walking past an alley, John jumped at the sound of a man hacking up and spilling the contents of his stomach all over the pavement. He stared down the alley trying to pinpoint the source, but it was too dark. Strangely drawn down the alley, he crept slowly. The smell of stomach acid pierced his nostrils. Without warning he tripped on a pair of legs jutting out from behind a few garbage cans. He stumbled to the ground on his hands and knees.

"WATCH IT, YOU STUPID BUM!" he roared in anger at the semiconscious man who had an odd look on his face. The man by the garbage cans looked worn, and was wearing a torn, filthy overcoat. It appeared that the man had been on the streets for a long time. He had a long beard and his eyes seemed vacuous. He reminded John of somebody, but he couldn't place his finger on who it was.

"S-s-s-orry m-mister," the man stuttered out, "s-s-ay, could ya' help a fella out, w-with any directions? I seem to be lost."

"Sorry," John said. The man's familiarity kept nagging at him, though, until he had to ask. "Do I know you?"

"N-nooo, son. You don't k-know me."

John wasn't convinced that he didn't know the man.

He brushed the adhesive muck from his coat as best as he could and headed back toward the street, resuming his course down the gritty sidewalk. Feeling a bit uneasy in this part of town, at this time of night, he slid his hand through his coat and rested it on the grip of his gun. John glanced up from the cement and noticed a couple guys talking and laughing. His hand tightened around the grip of the gun as he got close. Suddenly they both leapt from their perch on a high porch and walked a path to intersect his. Their hands went into their jackets and he readied himself for anything they would do. As soon as they were an arm's length away, one of them pulled a map out of his coat and asked John for directions. John was caught off guard and he told them he wasn't familiar with this part of town.

They continued down the street in the opposite direction and John felt a wave of embarrassment come over him. He couldn't stop thinking of how tense he got before he approached them. They looked like punk kids,

though. "Can't hurt to be safe," John rationalized. He continued walking.

John mentally reminded himself to pick up a case of beer on the way home. His mind began to drift to happier times of his life. He remembered being young and not feeling stuck in the city; and when he was in school, optimism overflowing; when he received his degree; when he met his wife, and the day of their wedding. She looked so beautiful. They were going to move out of the country when they saved enough.

Lost in thought, he didn't hear footsteps approaching him from behind. They gradually grew louder as they got closer. At the last moment he recognized the sound of the footsteps and whirled around, just in time to see . . . nothing. He ran back to the end of the block and looked up and down the last street. Nothing. John couldn't understand it. He was sure he had heard dragging footsteps. He started to pick up his pace.

A million things were running through John's mind but the last few began to take over. He walked faster. His ears began to pick up things that weren't there before. "No, they were there, they just weren't noticeable," John thought. He began to jog. A cold sweat broke out on his brow. There were all sorts of new things. He could hear whispers that didn't seem to make sense. Conversation in some weird language . . . and animals. He could hear millions of crickets and bugs buzzing around him, building an unbelievable roar. He began to wave his arms, trying to swat the hordes away. The sounds seemed to engulf him. He broke into a run. The noise kept at him, following him wherever he ran, building in intensity and reaching peak. He was about to cross an intersection when a group of men came around the corner. He plowed into them and fell back to the ground. John heard silence.

"What's your hurry, my man," on of them yelled, "you got my clothes all dirty!"

"I don't have time for this," John thought. He sprang to his feet, whipped his coat back, and drew his gun all in one motion. Before any of the men could react, John fired off his full clip.

Time's course slowed to a halt.

All of John's life scrolled through his mind. His childhood, teenage years, and his early adulthood. They all meshed into an unrecognizable mess. He seemed to actually be experiencing it all over, repeatedly . . . but something was different. He was back at the theater with one of his girlfriends from high school. Watching a movie, laughing, and putting his arm around her. He knew that he had come back and hoped that he would stay. John felt her grip his hand. He was having a great time. He turned and looked at his girlfriend and she looked back at him. As they leaned closed together, her face began to dissolve and run down her shirt. Her eyes, nose, and mouth liquified and disappeared into the fabric of her sweater. John tried to jump back, but everything slowed down drastically and he couldn't seem to move away. Her mouth was non-existent but he could still hear her voice, slurred and slowed a great deal.

"What's the matter John? John . . why are you leaving me, John?"

He stumbled backwards into the aisle and fell onto the carpet. She moved closer and closer to him without any effort. She seemed to glide to him, as if zooming through a camera lens. He covered his face and tried to yell but nothing came out of his mouth. The last thing John saw was her blurred, blank head in front of his. Everything began to fade until it reached deep black, and the only noise he could hear was his heartbeat. Thump, thump . . .

thump, thump. The darkness was a comfort.

His graduation ceremony from college faded in slowly. He got caught up in the excitement. John looked through the crowds while the names were being read off over the sound system. He watched the president handing out diplomas. John smiled and enjoyed sitting in the breeze. The things he'd do with his degree.

When his name was called, he moved out onto the aisle and up onto the walkway. John's excitement grew with every footstep. Halfway to the stage he spotted his family in the crowd. They were cheering and clapping. He waved they waved back. John looked back to the stage and realized that, even though he was walking, he wasn't getting any closer to the stage. He ran but didn't gain any ground. He ran harder, lost his footing and fell, sinking through the ground as if it were liquid trying to swallow him whole, John screamed as the ground laughed and strengthened its grip. His parents looked incredibly disappointed, and after a few moments, got up to leave. They disappeared into the crowd but John was unable to get up. He pulled with all of the strength he could muster but couldn't drag himself out of the watery earth.

At that moment everyone was gone except for an old man rummaging through the stack of diplomas on the stage. He looked directly at John. The old man began to open his mouth as if he were about to speak, but John was completely pulled under the earth, dirt claiming all space in his lungs.

John was left all alone in the dark once again.

The image of the church on his wedding day gradually realized itself before him. The altar was decked out in a spectacular display of flowers, and the light streaming through the stained glass windows gave a warm feeling to the church. He felt as if he were beginning a new life. The families in the pews seemed to sense his rebirth and some were overcome with tears. John turned and saw his soon-to-be wife, looking into his eyes. He stared back into her eyes and felt as if he had just been shot in the stomach. Who was this woman? He had shared ideas with her, exchanged words with her, and he had been intimate with her, but this woman was a stranger. She could be anybody.

As John fell to his knees he felt his body force all available liquids through his mouth. Bile poured into the carpet and his vision grew hazy.He looked up once more at the woman next to him, who calmly stared back. Darkness leapt at him.

His past faded to the present. A fog lifted from John's mind. Time resumed its course. John realized what he had done.

He looked down and surveyed the scene. Six men lying on the ground. Not moving. "I-It wasn't me," John protested, "n-no one w-will believe."

The gun slipped from his moist hand and hit the ground with a clang. He disappeared down the street, running as fast as he could.

An unknown amount of time passed. Everything seemed to blur. "Ww-what's happened to me," he asked himself, "where am I?" He realized he was lying between a couple of garbage cans, but he couldn't figure out how he got there. It was hard to see.

At that moment, John saw the outline of a man lurking past him and watched as he tripped over his feet.

"WATCH IT, YOU STUPID BUM!" the man screamed at him.

"S-s-s-orry m-mister," John stuttered out, "s-s-ay, could ya' help a fella out, w-with any directions? I seem to be lost."

"Sorry," the man replied, "do I know you?"

"N-nooo, son. You don't k-know me."

Normal?

C.L.McAllister

Not a real word.
Only the dumb believe in it. For the
Real world has no norm. There is
Merely difference
Among us.
Longing for norm is all we have, for without difference life would be a bore.

Dorothy

Erica Gallagher

All of these nations stuck in a daydream
I can count on one thing, nothing
When a little girl with
    no indication of terror
Gets sucked up[by a home-spun-whirl
Debris sends her a dreamin'
Set in a long lost world
With fairy tale substance
And villains and first class heroes
But she is the only one
Who really gets to go back to square one,
Back home.

Chapter 2

Jason Stone

(of a futuristic adventure thriller concerned with dragon love and vulgarity)

"You are not Sir Strongbrow. He is the only one who is to report to the king." Called the voice atop the tower.

"He was killed in the battle, I really must see the king. He is in danger." I called back. Just then another arrow hit the ground next to my other foot.

"Who the hell keeps shooting at me?" I yelled at the voice behind the wall.

"Sorry, that one slipped," called another voice.

"This is ridiculous, let me speak with the king, now or else I'll blame you two for his death." The thought of having the king's death on their hands must have hit home. The door raised.

"Next time we just fly over the wall and in to the court yard," I called to Slivarra.

"I do not think that would be a wise idea, since the ballstas are set up to counter just such an action by any dragon." She hissed the last word.

"I know, but . . ." I was cut off by the loud bang as the gate locked in place.

"Anyway, let's go."

"If you don't mind, Stone."

"Sir Stone" I corrected.

"Sorry, Sir Stone, but I'd like to take a bath in the hot spring. I'll be in my human form if you'd like to join me." She winked. "I'll be without clothes!"

"No, that's quite all right, Slivarra. I'll see you later tonight at the moon's zenith."

"All right." She leapt into the air and with one powerful downstroke of her wings took flight. I took a deep breath and entered the castle.

It took about five minutes to walk to the throne room. It was large enough to fit ten drag-

ons comfortably with huge pillars every ten feet. The now-dormant stained glass windows in the daylight would shine many different colors. The only light in the large hall was from the torches on each pillar. It was rumored that they were sent for the wizards of East Isle and would never burn you, nor go out. The thought of magical torches and the sight of the guards in the shadows made my stomach churn with fear. As I approached the steps that led to the throne, I knelt.

"My liege, I seek an audience with you."

"Yes, Sir Stone, please tell me who won the battle?" His voice echoed through the chamber. Even though he must have been very worried by the outcome, his voice betrayed no emotion.

"We did, my king." As I spoke I raised my head. The king was a muscular man around forty years old. Although he dressed in his day robes, they gleamed in the meager light given off by the torches. I could tell that he hadn't slept in a long while. The bags under his eyes were vary prevalent.

"That is a relief. I would like a full report in the morning, but for now I really must get some sleep. He started to rise from the throne.

"But, my liege, I was sent her by General Nikol to deliver this message to you and you only. I fear you life is in danger. I pulled the letter from my belt.

"Then bring it here." I handed him the letter. After reading it he looked up at me and said, "Sir Stone, of the nine dragon rider's I sent to the battle how many survived?"

"Just me, milord."

"If the Dracoz hear about this, we can expect a dragon attack within the next couple of weeks. You are dismissed, Sir Stone." I bowed and left the chamber as quickly as I could. Although I was pressed by the attack of the Dracoz, there was still one thing more pressing to me.

I knocked twice at the door before me. The two guards at the doorway continued there protection of the surrounding area, but neither of them stopped me or even gave me a second glance. A beam of light filtered through a crack in the door.

"Who . . . " The door burst open and I was met by a delicate embrace. I pressed the small figure to my breastplate. "I had no idea you were here. How long have you been in the castle?"

"About an hour. How are you?"

"Great, now that you're here. Oh my, look at the dent in your armor. It must have gone all the way through to the skin."

As she backed away I was taken by her beauty. She looked into my eyes and I was entranced by the swirling green color of her eyes. She was wearing a silk gown which clung to her enticingly. Still it was not nearly as soft as her touch. Long black hair that told of her nobility was tied back and ready for bed.

"Yes, I even managed to block the brunt of the attack with my sword. Damn."

"What's wrong?"

"I broke my sword in the battle and didn't get a new one yet."

"That's all right, dear. You'll have plenty of time for that in the morning. As for now . . . " I was pulled into her room by a strength that surprised me.

"Have you been working out?" I asked playfully.

"Are you too busy to kiss me?" I took off my armor and set it on the floor. I turned to the woman before me.

"Lynn, I love you." And kissed her gently on the lips.

I awoke the next morning, Lynn was curled up in my arms. She looked so peaceful that I had trouble convincing myself to stir. But I had many duties and little time to do them. I got up and put my shirt on.

"Where are you going?" Lynn asked sheepishly.

"Honey, I have many concerns today."

"Like what?"

"Well, I need to get this armor fixed and to give the king my report on the battle."

"What do you think he'll do about the Dracoz?"

"I'm not sure, but maybe he'll put me back into battle again. Who knows?"

"I doubt it. After the king hears what you did in the last fight, he should give you a medal and a promotion."

"Yeah, right! Not in this war. I'd bet he'd be so impressed with my fighting that he'd stick me right back on the front line."

"I hope not. Will you be around for dinner? I bet there will be a feast to the victory."

"Yeah, I'll be there." I picked up my dented armor and kissed Lynn goodbye. As I walked out the door I noticed two things, that the guard had changed and the guard on the left tried to peek into the room behind me. I shut the door behind me.

"Maybe next time you'll catch a glimpse of her, huh?" I slapped the stomach of his chain mail armor. The fact that he blushed told me that my suspicions were right.

"You make sure he doesn't hit on my wife." I told the other guard. He just smiled.

I returned to the king's throne room, and told him of the battle. While doing so I made sure that Sir Strongbrow's effort was glorified while my own was diminished as much as possible. Strongbrow had been an old friend. When the king heard about the large lionman I killed, he explained to me what this meant.

"Sir Stone, the lionman was the most prized fighter of the barbarian mercenary group. They believed him to be a god. His death is both good and bad for us. Good since now we have some extra time to send reinforcements to the castle while they choose a new leader. Bad because now they fight to avenge his death, not only because they're being paid."

We talked for what must have been an hour, and I left with the feeling of awe diminished but still very prevalent on my mind. I then carried my armor to the blacksmith's shop.

"Good day, Sir Stone, how may I help you?" Behind the desk stood a seven foot black man with a bald head and two missing front teeth. He wore nothing but a pair of pants and a leather apron to protect his chest from the sparks of the forge. I was impressed with his size and would not want to have ever met this man on the battle field.

"Zual, my good friend, how's business?"

"Too good! I hate war time. There's too much work fixing armor." He nodded to the bundle of armor in my hands and winked.

"Well, too bad. I need this dent fixed."

"Let me see that. Well, that is a deep cut. You're real lucky it wasn't any deeper."

"Yeah, no shit. Hey could you throw in a new sword on the bill, too?" I asked.

"Sure, but what is a shit?"

"Well it's dragonspeak for dung."

"Really!? So how is Slivarra these days?"

"Fuck! Slivarra! I totally forgot her. I got to go." I ran out the door and behind me I could hear the blacksmith say, "What is fuck?"

I made it to the pool after about five minutes of running. Between breaths I was able to yell for Slivarra.

"I'm right here. There's no need to yell." Directly behind me was the large form of a dragon.

"How does someone your size sneak up on

me?" I asked

"Who cares? You're late!" She looked angry, and even for a dragon, and if I didn't know her, I might have wet myself. Even knowing her as well as I do, I was scared.

"I'm sorry. It's just that Lynn and I haven't seen each other for so long."

"Oh, I see you were with her all night. That's just great!"

"Slivarra, she's my wife. Would you please be at least a little understanding?"

"You're lucky she's your wife. If the king and the prince died, you and she would be the rulers of the realm."

"Well, it's not like I planned it that way. Do you think they would let a lowly Dragonknight marry the woman second in line to the throne? It's all because of that stupid plague that killed almost the whole royal family.

"Yes, I know she was never supposed to be in line to the throne. What was she before, seventeenth? I mean before they started dying like flies."

"Or went insane like her mother." I made a sign to ward off any evil. It had been one year ago. I had just married Lynn when the plague took her father's life. Her mother was unaffected by the plague itself but the grief of losing her husband killed her. She threw herself off the east tower the night after he died. Anyway, I'm sorry I missed our meeting. I wanted to ask you a few things."

"Like what?" asked Slivarra.

"What does the word fuck mean anyway? I hear you use it all the time, and all I know about it is that it's from the old times.

She smiled a grin that showed all her razor sharp teeth. "It means to have sex in a way much more meaningless than you know."

"Kind of like you want to show me?" Immediately, I was sorry to have voiced my rejection of her.

She raised a claw above me. My first instinct was to be scared, but then reason reminded me that if I died she would also disappear. Actually she would be sent back to the sky as a star until another person of my blood family was born. Then if she chose, she could come down and bond herself to the infant. This ritual was done in a ceremony called the vilder. During the vilder the dragon and the infant are cut on their arms with a silver dagger and then there blood is mingled together. I still have the scar on my arm from the cut. Slivarra had done this over twenty times in my family line.

My parents were very happy that I was chosen as her new Dragonknight and not my cousin. I was chosen over him because I showed more promise as a warrior than he, and because of that bond, my strength and overall power had been increased by the dragonblood. The other power I received from the bonding was the power to heal wounds at ten times the normal rate.

Other Dragonknights receive other powers though. Sir Strongbrow had had a telepathic link with his dragon. Of course, being chosen by a dragon meant that you had a job anywhere you wished, and king's would often offer entire castle's for such a person. It's rumored that one dragon alone could kill hundreds of soldiers and one Dragonknight could kill forty himself. Since this could mean the deaths of thousands of troop's, dragon's are not used in combat. Unless of course you're sure you're going to win.

Although dragon's live for around nine thousand years, it is a pain to train a new Dragonknight, thus the dragons themselves try to stay out of the fighting. Lastly, dragons have an ability to cast certain magic like the teleport spell we used earlier. While some dragons can cast shield spells and travel spells, others cast fire spells that would get so hot it melts armor

to flesh.

"Come on now, Slivarra there's no need to become upset."

"Yes, you are right. I'm too old to become upset over these things."

"Too old! Slivarra, you're only three thousand years old. That's like being only twenty in human terms." I hoped to brighten her mood.

"It's all right. I'll be fine really." There was a long silence after that.

"Slivarra," I broke the silence.

"Yes, Stone." I let it pass this time.

"What was the world like three thousand years ago?"

End Chapter 2

I Wonder

Erica Coffey

What does the moon
do when hiding
behind the clouds?
What does the sun do
when it rains?
What do the mountains
do when covered up
by fog? Are they
cold when they
wear caps of snow?

What do the birds say
when singing to
each other day?
Do the trees feel naked
without their lives?
When not visiting us,
Where do the rain-flowers go?
I want to live there too.
What does the wind do
When it doesn't' blow?
Do you think that
Flowers like bees?
When looking for a
plant to smoke, did anyone
Ever try poison oak?

I'd really like to know.

The Braid Rite

Lissa M. Joachim

The moonlight shone from Mother Moon and Child Moon, bathing the forest in silver. Eyes shining with forbidden tears, Redwind watched as the wolf pack came to claim the body of her chieftess-mother, Bayan. The chieftess had been found on the beach after having been missing for nearly eight days. To Bayan's daughters, the pain of not knowing hurt more than her actual death.

Her own daughter, only six turns of the seasons old, clung to her back, her little hands

about Redwind's neck. In Redwind's arms, Bayan lay limp and lifeless, her silver hair hanging in shimmering waves.

"Mama?"

Silvertide's voice was a tiny gasp. She'd been staring intently at her grandmother's face until the wolves she was so frightened of appeared. Her tiny arms tightened around Redwind's neck, making her cough.

"Shh, cubling. It's just Whisper."

At the sight of the big, grey wolf, Silvertide's grip tightened even more. Icemist and her lovemate, Frostfire, stepped up and pried the whitehaired child from her mother's back. Redwind laid Bayan across Whisper's back and stepped away. The she-wolf turned, joined the rest of the pack, and they disappeared.

Redwind threw back her head and howled. Her sister and daughter instantly joined in the mournful sound. Soon, the whole tribe was singing to the Moons. In the distance, the wolves answered them. Silvertide jumped down from her aunt's arms and clung to her mother's leg. As the howling faded, the tribe looked about expectantly.

"Sister," Icemist, whispered.

"It is time," Fern interrupted, brushing a non-existent tear from her cheek. Redwind turned to her mother's lovemate and tribe elder. Oakthorn, the tribe's oldest member, stepped next to his fellow elder, a strip of leather in his hands.

With quick fingers, Fern braided the auburn hair at Redwind's left temple and secured it with the leather. Oakthorn took the fighting staff from Redwind's hand and replaced it with Swiftarc, their first chieftess' own short sword from many generations ago. After a moment of silence, Redwind fastened the sword at her side and took back her staff. Surprise registered in the elders' eyes. Once Starfall's sword was given to a new chief, it was custom to give up any previous weapons.

Redwind's blue eyes flashed, challenging any of them to protest. Standing on a large, flat rock, she looked over her tribe; her family. They all looked back at her, adoration on some faces, love on others and loyalty on all. She tugged the newly wound braid and raised both the sword and her staff over her head.

"I am Redwind!" Her voice was clear and loud. "I am Redwind." she repeated. "Sixth descendant of Starfall. We howl for Bayan, our chieftess and mother. She led us peacefully and well. She brought us from the chaos the fire wrought her, to safety and quiet. We howl, we hunt, and we move on. Tonight, we howl and dance for all we have lost, but we honor our fallen chieftess above all. Tonight's howl is for Bayan! In her memory!"

The tribe howled and sang with one voice. The wolves soon returned and joined in the song. The night fires were lit and, soon, they began to dance. With her tiny daughter in her arms, Redwind whirled about with her family and friends. They danced in memory of all those who had gone to the Palace of the High Ones before them for, tomorrow, they would return to the Now of wolf-thought...with their new chieftess leading the way.

Where's France?

Erica Gallagher

Half-way around the world
They smoke non-filter cigarettes
And drink tanks of potent coffee
In one sitting.
I don't need to read novels
And I don't need to watch movies
About the way the other half lives
In their art deco flats
Along their brick-paved blocks
Like a Fitzgerald tale.
My life won't become more vivid
Staring at a doily beneath a saucer
Or smelling an aroma steaming
    from a huge machine
One which gargles and spits.
See, the cafe reeked of something
And not stale coffee
And not clouds of smoke
Or uncircumcised Europeans
Not of the irony of the French virgin
Or scruffy goatees de noir
Not even of expensive fashions.
It reeked of everything
I ever feared I would find
In America.

The Cadillac Cafe

Karen Henning

Strolling down Ocean Boulevard, early in the morning, down the motel stairs, past all the consumerism to the newsstand, thirty-five cents, off north on the way to breakfast. This is Myrtle Beach, not what I pictured from the movie *Shag,* a strip we could not escape from, a line of cheap stores and pushy salespeople three restaurants and eighty hotels and motels. The beach was the only silent place to go.

Up the block, up, up, north, till I arrived at the Cadillac, a cafe located on the bottom floor of a small, cheap motel. A dirty little place, mismatched chairs, with a diner counter, an open griddle, and serveyourself coffee. The north, back wall was half old-style wood grain paneling, half-covered with photographs, people from all over, mostly older pictures, people in 70's attire. Pictures of people fishing, partying, hugging, smiling. School pictures of children, like the bulletin board at the dentist's office. But this collage of faces covered three good-sized walls. Faces, faces, patiently watching from the walls as you eat your runny eggs and perfectly-browned toast. Cup of coffee, not the greatest, reading the front page, watching the woman behind the counter, the one-man-show running the place, waitress and cook both, sweat on her forehead, bandanna wrapped around her neck, ready to be raised to her brow. Above the grill was one of those signs with twenty-some letters, a saying that no one knows, I learned not to ask, probably some insult to customers. There was a flat metal sheet, maybe it was a refrigerator, with a bumper sticker attached that caught my eye.

My whole trip had been a trial in survival away from the one I love, a measure of my tolerance and will. Journal keeping, newspaper reading, everyday rituals to keep me busy and keep me thinking. The bumper sticker said, "Struggle is the meaning of life, but death is the consequence." It was so profound to me, I had just written a piece on struggle, the newfound struggle in my own life. It was a

comfort, and so was the sweaty woman who made awful home-fries. And so were the anonymous faces on the wall, people I will never meet. They sit somewhere, maybe at work, maybe at home, mowing the lawn, something, and think about their vacation to Myrtle Beach, knowing they are immortalized on the walls of a greasy little diner on the strip.

My View of Italy

C.L.McAllister

If I were in Italy, in the countryside,
    I would die of starvation
For I would never eat or sleep or act
    like the self I think I am
All I would ever do is stare
    for countless hours, days just looking
At the beautiful land
I would drink wine and smoke all day,
    every day
I would make love under the moon
With someone who couldn't understand
    my language
I would study everything about Italy
    until the very little particle
        of air I breathe
I would dance at least once a day
    until my legs hurt so bad I couldn't walk
An extraordinary Italian
    would have to carry me
He would be my artist,
    an artist I could call my own
Who would paint my soul across a canvas
I would always be afraid to sleep
    because of the thought that when I woke
That I'd be back in my boring town
    and never be able to see Italy again

From A City Bus In Spring

Francine Tolf

Late April, and pale green shoots
fight skyward through soil
choked with bottle caps and broken glass,

And a woman in a pink dress
paces on a street corner frothy with blossoms,
chanting about Nazis.

My bus rattles by her filled with faces
so fragile
in the slanting afternoon light—

Weary eyes and mouths
that hint of tenderness
as the bare branches today hint of green—

I catch from my window
an old man in an undershirt
    hanging a bird cage
from his sill.

The bird is tiny and blue.
I hope with a sudden, hard hope
that it is singing.

The First Encounter

I.denver Magenta

smiling and beguiling,
no data sent- —
a porcelain press oflips
to press my
    poorslain heart.
Looks of so-so(so it hurts)
sounds of Tchaikovsky and tea kettles
ring 'round
an ear
as eyes
stare
off.

"Obligatory Occasion"

Erica Seversen

Pretty pearl silk shield
pressed for the fashion show,
prepared to enter the field,
though my uncertainty grows.

Dressed in my best smile,
held as my cheeks ache
plastic wile, what a trial,
no one knows it's fake.

A tired conversation
interrupts my ear
I struggle to return
answers that are clear.

My voice travels from a distance
I feel far away, in a place
that welcomes conflicting opinions
and nerves don't stretch or fray.

And My Mirror Laughs

Lyubov E. Mir

Sometimes I see my face in the mirror
And am startled by its beauty
Then I wonder why I don't
    hear the glass laughing
Because it must be playing a joke.
For if I really had that flawlessness
Revealed in my open blue eyes

In the smooth curve of my cheek
In the ripple of my hair
Why doesn't the rest of the world see it?
Why do I hold a place on the outside
If I am really that beautiful?
Maybe the lighting in my bathroom
    is different
From the glow of the real world
Maybe they all just don't see
    what they're missing
Maybe next time I'll catch my mirror
    as it laughs.

I.denver Magenta

a wink and a pass of a smile,
    persistent on her good nature-
With both
    f
    l
    a
    g
    s

    up
arace could
take its place.

a week could pass for a mile,
and miles go on forever
                (so mile markers say)
but here we are
way beyond clever.

365

Erica Gallagher

I've had 365 chances to show my face
Now I realize that my chances are gone.
I've had numerous chances to try and erase
The burden that you've drawn
All over the cloud that I am on.
You've had 365 chances to give me a break
But how could you, you never even knew
That I was cleaning all the messes
    you'd make
And I even took the blame for a few
Now you expect me to forgive you?
You were a dull point at a once sharp end
You were a smart cookie, but you crumbled
What a fool you've made of a friend
Who wanted to see you happy and humbled
How I regret the love over which I stumbled.

Carla Swinke

Where are we?
Who are you?
Hello?
Anyone home?
The sign on the wall read; WELCOME.
Come sit down have a seat.
Questions come to mind:
Why are we not together?
Did I break all the mirrors?
Are the windows shattered?
May I climb out?
Are all the doors open?
Do we need a key?

Help me unlock it.
Close the door; it's cold!
Open it again, it's hot!
Let me lie down here awhile and rest.
My mind is a probe.

Melted

Jeff Gilleland

Sitting placidly
Half asleep
Inhibitions released
Gone is the feeling my superego drives
Alive
I am alive
Who are you?
The one who takes me to the place
Of baubles and boinging
No bitching nor banging
Reality lies hanging
Thank you.

Goulden Skyy Part I

Chris Jablonski

Janet Burton sat at her desk, fumbling through a stack of papers. She found the name she was looking for and scratched a large X on it. At the bottom she wrote PRISON RECORD in block letters and put it aside. "Two more and that's it," she murmured to nobody in particular.

A knock at the door caught her attention, especially since it was to the beat of the old "shave and a haircut" routine. *Another funny one*, she thought disgustedly. "Come in," she said and winced when she realized she'd rhythmically completed the fanfare.

The young man who entered looked not unlike many of the people that had come through that door during the day; during her career. Slobs by day pretending to look clean-cut by putting on a nice shirt. This one was fairly tall, with a mop of blackish hair on his head and a few blemishes on his face. He smiled and displayed a row of braces on his teeth; Janet hardly noticed. She instead began to mentally catalogue his actions and his level of maturity. Slowly and jerkily closes the door. Gives another weak smile. Stands in front of my desk. Folds hands behind his back. Tries to catch my attention. Janet finally sighed and stood up, offering her hand.

"Janet Burton, and welcome, Mr. —?"

"Skyy."

Janet sat back down and searched through the pile for his name. "Sky, sky. Here we are." *Skyy? What, like the vodka?* "So, how are we today . . . um, *Goulden?*"

"Actually, it's pronounced 'golden'. Kind of rhymes with moldin'. And I'm fine, Janet. How are you?"

Goulden Skyy? What, were his parents hippies? She flustered for a moment, then regained her professionalism. She often prided herself on that. "That's an interesting name, Goulden. Can you tell me a little about how you got it?"

"Well, Janet, it was originally Leonard Millerton, but I changed it. I thought it would sound pretty cool."

"I see. Well, do you have any experience in this line of work?" *Might as well humor him.*

"Let me think." He stared at the ceiling for

a few seconds, tapping his finger on the chair. "What line of work would this be again?" She told him. "Hmm. Nope."

"I see." She had seen his kind before. It was fairly rare, but some people thought if they acted aloof enough, they might actually get a job. It was now only a matter of getting him out of her office in a timely fashion. "Well, Mr. Skyy, I'm sure you don't want me to waste your time. I have other applicants to see today, and if you're not even going to *try* to . . ." she trailed off, waiting for his response.

Goulden just returned a blank stare.

"I mean, what chance did you honestly think you had at this job? We did say experience was necessary." She looked down at his application. "And your grades in high school are nothing to gloat about." She squinted her eyes at something on the paper. *What does that say?* "And what's this chicken-scratch say under 'special skills'?"

"I can read minds."

The diner was fairly crowded, which made Adam a little nervous. He waded through the sea of people gripping his tray like a life preserver. He tried to give himself as wide a path as possible, but he inevitably bumped into some people along the way. "Please be empty, please be empty." he repeated to himself.

He arrived at a booth in the corner of the restaurant, near a window. Four people sat in it, apparently two couples. The two guys, both in lettered high school jackets seemed to be talking to each other, annotating their conversations with occasional squeezes of their girlfriends. The two girls just giggled.

Adam stood not two feet away from the booth, staring nervously from one of the guys to the other. One took notice and an inquisitive look appeared on his face. "What?" he barked.

"Um, you're sitting at my table."

The two slowly turned their heads toward each other. They burst out laughing. The two girls giggled.

"Well, it's not my table exactly. Goulden and I, uh, share it."

Guy 1 turned back toward Adam, still shaking from laughter. "What? Golden and I? What's that supposed to mean?"

Guy 2's laughs dissipated as he put a more annoyed look on his face. "We're not going to move. It's obvious. Just go sit over there." he pointed to a nearby table.

Adam groaned, but grudgingly walked to the other table and dropped his tray down with a bang. The two guys again burst out in laughter. The two girls giggled.

About ten minutes later, Adam looked up as Goulden sat down with a similar tray. Behind him, Adam could hear muffled whispers of "that's probably 'golden'" and some giggling. He and Goulden exchanged pleasantries.

Hey. Hey. Sorry about the table. Doesn't matter. How'd it go? Shitty. Didn't get the job? Nope. Your dad's going to kill you. Yep. A long pause followed, the two eating their food quietly.

"You're never going to start working, are you? Interview after interview just—happens. When's it going to stop?"

"Whenever I want it to. Look, Adam, I don't want a job. I don't need a job. I've tried to tell you that already. I want to write music."

"You do not. You don't even play an instrument." Goulden shrugged his shoulders. "What went wrong this time, anyway? Oh, no! You didn't tell him you could read minds, did you?"

"He was a her. And I can read minds." There was no conviction in his voice.

"Goulden, you've got to do something. I

mean, what do you actually do? Nothing. At least start taking some classes at the college."

"What, the junior college?"

"Shut up. No wonder you're such a failure."

"I can hear that kind of shit from my dad. And I will tonight, so shut up. And I'm not a failure."

"Whatever." A short pause. "So what do you want to do tonight?"

"I don't know."

Goulden stared at his face in the mirror as he heard his father's car pull up in the driveway. He took a deep breath and walked downstairs into the kitchen, and waited. When the front door opened, Goulden approached it steadily. "Hi, Dad."

He couldn't get over his father looking so . . . tall. And imposing. He had that effect on people, which people believed was part of his success as a lawyer. Standing in his crisp suit and tie, David Millerton stared down at his son. "You know what I want to hear."

"I don't think so, Dad." Goulden tensed.

"Dammit! Damn it, damn it!" his father's eyes were wide with rage and his face twisted with disgust. "When the hell are you going to get a job!" It didn't sound like a question, so Goulden didn't answer. Mr. Millerton visibly calmed himself. "Son," he said, "I've offered you a position at my company. It wouldn't be hard to impress somebody with my recommendation."

Goulden turned away. "I told you I didn't want to work there."

"Why not? Why the hell not?" The fire was returning.

"I don't know!" Of course, he knew. Kind of.

"Well, I do! I'm setting you up an appointment tomorrow, whether you like it or not!"

"I'm obviously not going to like it," Goulden muttered, but it was lost to his father as he pulled off his tie and turned away into the other room. "I've told you I'm not going to like it."

The next day, Goulden approached Adam after his classes let out. Adam sat on a bench outside the school alone, eating a sandwich. "So what happened?" Adam asked between bites.

"Usual. Got yelled at. I think he's getting me an interview at his company."

"Good. You need a job. Make some money. Do something."

Goulden shrugged. "That guy is failing one of his classes. History."

Adam finished off his sandwich and looked to where Goulden was pointing. "I really wish you'd stop that. It's getting old." Goulden shrugged again. "What do you have against work, anyway? Everybody works, Goulden."

I'm not everybody, Goulden thought. "I don't know" was all he said, though.

"Or at least go to school. It's better than working." Adam started walking off toward the parking lot. "You could just take a few classes if you really don't want to work that much."

"That's what you keep saying. You're just like my dad."

"I don't know, Goulden. I guess I just see myself getting more responsible, I think. I know eventually I'm going to have to live on my own and pay for stuff."

"You're still afraid to talk to people."

"And you're so," he tried to think of an adequate word, "unafraid of people that you just irritate them all the time. You create this image for them of a person that's not you. And then you, I don't know. Then you tell them you

can read minds. I mean, what's wrong with you? It was kind of funny in high school, but . . . it's getting old, Goulden. Or Leonard."

Goulden shrugged.

"I remember you used to write stuff. For English, in high school? Some of it was pretty good."

Goulden stared at a cute girl as she walked by. She was about to break up with her boyfriend, who was a selfish jerk. She-

"Goulden! Maybe you should start writing again. It'd be cool to make a novel. You know? Like Stephen King? They make so much money."

Goulden slowly turned his head toward his friend. "It always goes back to money. 'Get a good job, make lots of money.' Besides, I want to write music.

"You're completely tone-deaf, Goulden. Just do good on the interview this time. Get the job. You don't have to like it, but at least it will keep your dad off you back for a while. Then maybe you can eventually get yourself fired."

Star

Jeff Gilleland

I want to be larger than life
Worshipped by thousands
of high-school kids
I want to be a mega-star
And get the hell out of here
I want to fly away
Fame and fortune could take me to any place
that I want to go
Let me go
I want to be
Larger than life
Larger than anything that precedes me
And get the hell out of here

If I could be on the cover of "Teen"
My picture would hang on the walls
of psycho 13 year old girls
That'd be cool
And I could get the hell out of here

"A Reflection"

Joe Tichy

I like to surf
in the starlight
that's just now getting here
traveling a billion years
just to shine on a wave
and pause a while on their journeys
and spend a few hours together
on an empty peak.
We surf all night
while above us
millennia go by.

A Day to Remember

Brenda Shear

I woke this morning to sunlight warming my face as I tried to ward off the coming day. I rose drowsily from my bed to turn on the shower and go through the daily ritual of getting ready for work. After my shower, makeup, and dressing I went downstairs to have my usual breakfast of a plain bagel with cream cheese and a glass of orange juice.

While eating my little breakfast, I clicked on the television and watched my usual bout of Good Morning America. Discovering that I was definitely overdressed for the day thanks to the trustworthy weatherman, I quickly ran upstairs to change and then made a mad dash to arrive at work on time.

There it seemed that everyone looked as if he or she had just lost a friend. *Uh-oh,* I thought with impending gloom, *the downsizing has finally begun.* Several months before a large corporation determined to improve the financial figures of our family-owned business had bought the company. It was only a matter of time before lower-income people were going to be brought in to save on the personnel budget. It evidently seemed that the day had finally arrived.

I walked over to the desk of my supervisor, Bill Steiner, who had shown me the ropes when I first signed on with the company three years ago. "Don't tell me you are one of the first to go?" I asked him sympathetically.

"Come on, Jessie, you know that I have been here the longest and I am also the highest paid. At least I have my savings to rely on if I get into trouble." He shrugged his shoulders, gave me a quick hug and continued, "Hang in there, kid, you may be next. There is a group of us heading for Sally's to have lunch and a couple of drinks, you know, as a good-bye party, so if you want to meet us there on your lunch, we'd love to see you."

As I walked away from Bill's desk after agreeing to meet him and the others later on, I shook my head sadly, disbelieving that they were letting one of their best workers go. I went to my desk and began my morning tasks, but an hour later my boss, Mr. Ray Vinson, rang my extension and requested my presence in his office right away. I felt my heart begin to beat rapidly, my eyes started to tear, and I knew that I was not going to be receiving good news. *Well, this is it. I can't believe that they are doing this to me. No! I will be brave and not show any emotion. All they care about is their damn costs and budgets.* Well, here goes. The moment of truth had come as I arrived at Mr. Vinson's doorway. I took a deep breath, squared my shoulders, head held high and opened the door.

"Come in, Ms. St. John. Please have a seat." He said quickly as he motioned toward the chair directly in front of his desk. I shifted back and forth in my seat trying to find a more comfortable position, but he began. "As you know, the recent changes in management have prompted us to make several changes in each department. Against our better judgement, we have decided that we will be able to make do without several people in our administration department." All the while he was preparing to give me the boot, I kept thinking, *he didn't even have the courtesy to look disturbed at having to perform such an awful task. What a jerk! Must be nice to sit there so calmly ruining people's lives.* " . . . so therefore, we have decided to terminate your employment with us, effective immediately. I hope that there will be no hard feelings; we will provide you with a good reference. We must ask that you clean your personal

belongings from your desk and leave immediately." Mr. Vinson then stepped around his large oak desk and extended his hand to me, "It really has been a pleasure working with you," he smiled. "You never know, this may be the best thing that has ever happened to you." As he urged me to the door, he finished with, "Of course, we will give you excellent references. You need only ask."

A melancholy feeling rushed through me but was followed immediately by a dozen thoughts rolling through my head. *Great, where will I go from here? I was just getting ahead. What about all those bills on my desk at home? Why did this have to happen now? Where should I apply first? How can I face all those people that will know immediately that I've been let go?*

I went back to the warehouse, where the lights were turned low and at least two dozen boxes were lining up against the side wall. *Just how many people are they "downsizing?"* I asked myself. I walked over and grabbed the closest box and went back the many friends I would leave behind, so I just walked out the front doors, hoping that they would find it in their hearts to understand. I guess I would be joining the gang as one of the fired after all. Well, I had been warned.

Two things hit me as I walked, for the last time, out the doors of the place that I had dedicated the last three years to. One, the weatherman was wrong, it was not going to be breezy, sunny, with a high of 82; it had to be at least 60. The second thing I realized was that it was raining. No raincoat, no umbrella, just rain. And me getting extremely wet, of course. *Well, this must be my lucky day.* I realized then that I was in no rush to be anywhere so I walked in the rain to the museum around three blocks away to kill some time before going to meet my friends at Sally's.

I paid the entrance fee at the front of the museum and wandered through the halls filled with historical art, Indian artifacts, and other things from the past until I came to my favorite part of the whole museum, "Art through the Ages." I went to the last row to admire the painting that had taken my fancy two years ago. Every other month I came to see the painting and envy the woman who seemed so carefree and reckless on canvas. She seemed to not have a care in the world as she rode a white horse through a field of wildflowers with her head thrown back warming her face with the glowing sun. The print below it had claimed that an unknown artist who was madly in love with his wife painted the portrait of her and her beloved horse, Violet, the day before the horse carried her to her death over a cliff. The portrait had been appropriately named "Riding Violet to Heaven."

As I reached the spot where my painting usually was, I realized that it was no longer in its place. Panicking, I frantically searched the rest of the paintings hanging through the halls, but to no avail. My painting was gone. I turned to search for a museum curator and asked if he knew where the painting had gone. "I'm sorry miss" he said apologetically, "the painting was on loan and has been returned to its owner. It was removed just this morning before the museum opened." I thanked him for the information and asked if he could tell who the owner was. He shook his head no and said it was against museum policy.

I stepped into the nearest washroom to wipe away the tears that had been threatening to spill since leaving Mr. Vinson's office had suddenly erupted in an unstoppable waterfall. After several minutes of giving in to my grief, I dried my eyes and decided to make the most of it. I

would be with friends who would understand how I was feeling in just over an hour. At least they would know what I am going through.

I went back through the halls and glanced at the empty space I had occupied not 15 minutes before. He rubbed his chin as if deep in thought and then turned as if he had felt me staring at him. "It had to be the nicest picture in the museum," he said.

"Yes, it was my favorite," I replied as I stepped closer sensing that this man may be able to understand my feeling of loss at it absence. "I have always come here just to see that particular painting. I guess that I won't have much to look forward to next time I come since that was usually my reason for being here."

"You never know. Maybe you will see it again someday. What attracted you to the portrait in first place?" he asked.

"I would definitely have to say the way the woman rides the horse with such abandon, as if she has no worries in the world." I replied.

"Too bad she had to have such a bad ending to her fairy tale," he said sadly. I could not help noticing what a handsome face he had. Sensitive too. A very rare find in a man in this day and age. With a body like that, he could almost be a dream come true. He seemed to catch my eye at that moment, and I felt my face turn pink as he seemed to read my mind. Suddenly uncomfortable, I glanced at my watch noticing that it was almost noon.

"It was nice talking with you, but I really must go." I said and turned to walk away.

He lightly grasped my arm stalling my exit when he asked, "Wait. Wold you like to go out to dinner sometime?"

Somewhat taken aback, I replied, "I'm sorry, but I hardly know you. I don't even know your first name and already you are asking me to dinner." He must have felt my reluctance, because he hesitated a moment before he reached into his wallet and pulled out a business card that read, Jared Braxton. "If you change your mind, give me a call. I normally don't ask women out that I have just met, but for some reason, I want to ask you. I can honestly tell you that I don't have any ulterior motives. Just dinner and conversation. Nothing more." I started to reply, but he pressed his finger to my lips saying "No, don't answer now, think about it. Call me." And with that, he turned and walked away.

I couldn't believe it. A handsome, mysterious stranger with the most mesmerizing blue eyes that I had ever seen had just hit on me in a museum. As if waking from a daydream, I suddenly realized that if I didn't hurry I would be late for lunch. I hurried from the museum and quickly walked the two blocks it took to get to Sally's.

As I entered the local grill where a lot of my former co-workers and I frequently dined, I couldn't stop thinking of the man in the museum. As I met my group and we sat down to lunch, I pictured Jared's face just before he turned and walked away. He had worn an expression of pleading as if he knew that I was thinking that he was a little crazy and he was begging me not to see him in that light. I directed my attention back to the group just as they were starting a tirade against the new owner's of our former place of employment. It seemed that many of them had not expected the turn out that most of us knew was coming a mile away. I couldn't help but feel the outsider of the group as they raged at the unfairness of it all. I wasn't mad anymore. Hell, I was madder that my picture was gone from the museum. I could find another job anytime, but to replace that picture, impossible.

Bill, sensing that I was not really joining in, turned to me and said, "It seems kind of unreal doesn't it?" Without waiting for a reply he continued, "Just last week we were talking about the improvements that would be made with the computer system and how much easier our jobs would be. Now, this week we are all sitting here at our favorite lunch spot bitching about how terrible the changeover is. I mean, it's not like we didn't know it was coming."

I didn't know of any answer that I could give that might make him feel any better, so I took another drink of my vodka and lemonade enjoying the tangy sting as it made its way to my stomach. I could feel the warm tingly feeling that seemed to be coming over me as a result of my second glass almost emptied. I then made an effort to join in by talking about how I felt and quickly became involved in the conversation.

It must have been an hour later after lunch had been served and eaten and about two more glasses of vodka and lemonade when I took a trip to the restroom. I stumbled slightly as I opened the door into the brightly-lit room that was in sharp contrast to the dimly lit eating area. I looked in the mirror and was amazed at how much different I looked after a couple of drinks. My cheeks had taken on a warm glow and my eyes looked drowsy. My hair had finally dried and was much curlier around my face. *I should not be drinking on a day like this, especially at 1:00 in the afternoon.* Glancing at my watch, I corrected myself, okay, at 2:30 in the afternoon.

I stepped out of the restroom and looked to my left at the south side of the restaurant. There, seated with three other men reviewing a folder of information just handed to them, was the man from the museum. Twice in one day? I couldn't believe this, I had never met any one I was remotely interested in seeing and here twice in the same day I had seen the hottest-looking man I had ever seen. He must have felt me staring at him because at that moment he looked up and gave me a secretive smile. He must have excused himself from the table just then because he said something to the other men at his table, pushed back his chair, and was walking toward me. He did not seem at all surprised to see me, so when he reached me, I couldn't help asking, "Did you follow me here?" When he said no, I shook my head as if to shrug off an illusion and looked up to see him studying me. "I know, I'm a little tipsy and I'm having a hard time believing that you are real." I said so he wouldn't think that I was bonkers.

"As you can see, I do have a legitimate business meeting in progress. I couldn't resist saying hi to you since you looked much more inviting than sitting there with three stuffy business partners," he said, then added, "I hope you don't mind."

"No, really, I guess I was just a little shocked to see you again so soon. I haven't even had time to consider your dinner proposition."

He put up his hands to put a stop to my conversation. "I don't need an answer. I told you to think about it, and I meant it. I just wanted to say hi. Oh and to mention how pretty you looked standing there with your cheeks glowing like roses. It's very becoming. I better get back. See you later." With that, he was headed back to the table, and I just stood there in awe. I couldn't get a word in edgewise. He had bowled me over in seconds flat. As he sat back down, he glanced up at me and gave me a devilish wink. I could feel my rosy cheeks turning even redder as I rejoined the group.

I looked around and noticed that out of the ten people that were seated before I had left,

only three remained. The couple from accounting finished paying their check and they too left, leaving only Bill and me at an empty table. Bill turned and asked me if I would like to join him at the bar for a last one before we followed suit. I said, "Sure" and ordered one more vodka and lemonade when I reached the bar. We talked for almost an hour about what we were both going to do now and about the new jobs we would probably get. Bill got up then and said that he had called his wife to come pick him up an hour ago and that she was there. He gave me a quick squeeze, wished me luck, and headed out the door with his wife.

I decided to take a cab home since I knew that I was in no shape to drive. I left a tip on the bar for the bartender and went out the door and into the rain to find a cab. As I finally hailed a taxi, I heard a voice beside me say, "Mind if I join you?" and turned to see Jared standing there getting drenched in the rain just like I was. "Sure," I said, "We'll split the tab."

We both entered the cab and told the driver the addresses of our destinations. It seemed that my house was closer than the ten-mile drive to his office building. We were both quiet for a minute when he turned to me and said, "I can't wait anymore. Are you going to have dinner with me or not?"

Feeling impulsive and a bit reckless, I answered, "Sure. I would love to. I guess sometimes I just have to learn to live a little dangerously."

Arriving at my house, I paid the cab driver my fee and started to get out of the car. Jared stopped me again by grabbing my arm lightly and said, "Wait, no fair. I don't even know your name and you have already agreed to have dinner with me. You owe me that much at least."

With a little laugh at my forgetfulness, I reached out to shake his hand. "Jessica St. John, and you've just made a good day out of the worst day of my life." As he reached out to grab my hand with his own I knew he could feel the same tingle of pleasure that I had felt at the contact. We both stood still for a moment as we realized that neither of us wanted to let go.

I was the first to break the spell as I pulled my hand away and said, "Well, it has been nice meeting you, Jared. And I will call you. Bye." With that I turned and went up the stairs to my front door. As I was turning the key in the lock, I looked over my shoulder just in time to see Jared touching his two fingers to his forehead in a motion of "touché" as the cab pulled away from the curb into traffic. I threw back my head and laughed at the gesture. I guess he knew that I had the upper hand in the conversation this time.

I went into my house and looked at the clock above the stove. It read 4:18 p.m. I decided to head for the bathroom for a quick bath. An hour later after I had taken the longest and hottest bath of my life, I wiped the steam from the bathroom mirror and stared at my reflection. I wondered what tomorrow would bring and hoped that dinner with Jared would be everything that I wanted it to be. I watched my face change, lighting up at the thought of being with my mysterious museum man again. I decided that I would learn everything there was about him and made a resolve to give him a call first thing in the morning to set up our dinner date.

As I left the bathroom dressed only in a white terry cloth robe, I planned the rest of my evening. I would settle down, read a good romance novel, and think about what I would wear on my dinner date. When I reached my bedroom, I lay down on my bed with the romance novel that I had selected from my bookcase in the hallway and started to read. I must have read for only a few moments when I fell asleep to dream of this day to remember.

Riff
Jeff Hicks

max on your horn
play that sound
the sound
the one that pulls them back
keep them in their seats
on the edge of their seats
by the seat of your pants
keeping them in
putting money in your pantspockets
food on the table
Play that sound
that black sound
that white sound
that grey sound
that blue sound
bring it around
that multicolored sound
and keep them in their seats.

The Pressure Cooker
Steve Siedler

In this pressure cooker,
I can not communicate,
mentally or physically.
I am a washed-up vegetable.

In this pressure cooker,
Life passes me by.
In every aspect.
I am burnt food.

In this pressure cooker,
The world forcefully dominates.
I am the casserole,
That you have just eaten.

Spiraling
Matt Furlane

Brown blurs spiraling downward around a wide old oak tree. claws frantically
Scratching, clinging, scraping. intent on evading and catching. carelessly
Circling toward the ground. oblivious to wind, acorns, leaves, green
Grass, broken branches, sticks, and a man approaching slowly,
Unobtrusive. a moments' pause as pairs of
Black eyes gleam, noses gasp for
Scent, and excited tails
Twitch, and one
Wags.
"GET "EM' BOY!"
Brown
Blurs spiraling upward
Around a wide old oak tree. claws
Frantically scratching, clinging, climbing
Intent on fleeing. alert and aware in the branches
High above fallen leaves, with the wind, acorns, and broken
Branches littered among the blades of grass. a moment's pause, eyes
Gleaming downward, tails twitching in anger, a staccato of chatter answered by
Hungry barks, until everything returns to normal and oblivious spiraling begins again.

Too Late
Cheryl Elwell

Too late for school
engine overheating, Too late to let it cool
Too late, can't take that test.
Too late, with no rest
Too late, for education
Too late, need a vacation

Too Late, Too Late,
    the words round my mind resonate
Too Late, my life is thrown
    about in haphazard jest
Too Late, God loves his jokes best

Too Late, Too Late,
    the words round my mind resonate
Too Late for my heart to be content
Too Late for my love to be sent
Too Late you are already taken
Too Late I guess my feelings were mistaken
Too Late your heart belongs to another
Too Late my heart aches

Too Late, Too late,
    the words round my mind resonate

Hieronymus Bosch Painting
Karen Henning

Hieronymus Bosch painting
distorted, twisted bodies
impalement among the tortures of hell
on the other side paradise
joyous nude sunbathers eating fruit
and in the middle, earth
somewhere between ultimate
pleasure and pain,
the center of a tug of war
between good and evil.

Food For Thought
Evonne Myers

The motive is there
Along with a long, lost stare
Did he do it or not?
Is he a part of the solution
Or of the plot?
Confusion steps in
All have sinned
Lies, betrayal, greed
Will he fail or succeed?
Is he one of America's Most Wanted?
Or is he like a house haunted?
Is there any good in this man or is
He only a fake?
Is he a weasel or a venomous snake?
Will he turn himself in or keep running
Until he's caught?
I guess this is just some food for thought.

I'm Toast
Erica Gallagher

Lord, I'm toast
I have nothing to boast
For the eighty and some odd years
I lived on the Baja Peninsula coast
Except a surf board
A big yellow station wagon,
Oh yeah, and a collection of shark teeth,
    you'll dig them the most.

The Alley
Susan Sink

Sometimes while I sleep my fears slip out
to the alley for a cigarette. It's cold.
They kick the dumpster in their frustration.
They start trouble. Fights break out.

How angry my fears are.
How tough, how old. Undistinguished,
like old men wrecked with drink.
There must be some other life in this city.

I don't love them. I keep them in check.
I avoid them, ignore them—
    they're all wound up.
In the alley they have it out:
it's always the sound of blows
    that wakes me.

DOA
Erica Gallagher

One last dream
One last hope, one last prayer to pray
One last shot at bringing you down
This is my one last day.

My last hours
My final chance to make you see
You, my friend, are nothing but my hate
I will bring you to the grave with me.

One last kick
Before they cover me with dirt
You were my one last enemy
Who I intend to leave hurt.

Violated
Erica Coffey

Prying and pricking
touching and
commanding
fingers roam
through the
sacred hole
that is my
mouth. I'm
safe for
another
six months.

Francine Tolf

Some bikers fed LSD
to a starved lioness
whose teeth and claws had been removed.
They drank beer and watched her
panic, running in place
in her cage

As she does now
in my brain I can't
stop her she refuses to
trot away all better.

I did not ask
for this branding: I am stamped
with so many pictures
I never wanted,
tattooed with obscenities
no soap or saltwater
will scrub clean.

On the bus, the L
I wonder that people don't stare
till I remember
my graffiti is invisible.

I sometimes imagine eyes
that see the images blazing
under my winter coat,
my blank skin.

We leave the train together,
this gentle-eyed stranger and myself
He promises me it will all make sense.
He explains everything.

The Halloween Party

Kirsten Honiotes

As we drove Grove road an eerie feeling
  crept into my being
the warm sun's glow became snuffed
  by a scarlet sky
and left an ominous presence hanging
  in the autumn air.
Large Oak trees hovered over the road
  trying to grab us with their spiny fingers
and there around the bend stood
  that forgotten cemetery
with it's cock-eyed stones
  projecting aimlessly.
Blood red leaves fell
  upon the dusty path-ways
leading to the resting places
  of souls long passed.
Before long we arrived
  at that historical farm house
with it's Victorian eaves and shutters
  speaking of death and birth
and of the many lives that dwelled
  within it's ancient walls.
Greeted by drunkards in masquerade
  we joined the festivity.
Goblins gathered around the fire
  smoking ghosts and swallowing spirits.
Children of the corn darted about
  more devilishly than ever
and the witchery continued till like vampires
threatened by the dawn
  we cowered to our coffins.

Holocaust Midnight
Michael Fletcher

Silent sighs the night
As ashes through moonlight
Sift down a silver snow
and cover children
Who sleep below

black-eyed cancer
Kim Vogen

black-eyed cancer
misfortune
disaster
bringing an end to it all
tourniquet handshake
quicksand
landscape
taking your grip by the balls
embroidered veil
velveteen
entrails
splattering remnants on the walls
shattered illusions
unraveled
conclusions
devouring minds and working on call

Careless Armor
Erica Gallagher

One man's opinion
Another man's philosophy
Life is not a religious experience
Unless you live it in liberty
And when you live it as a hermit
You will be forced to believe the rest
What is one man's objective
Just became the bullet in your chest.

Vietnam Memorial
Michael Fletcher

Frozen light
Stares out the faces
Innocents in time
With companion's dust

Innocence gone
Breath abated
They stand in attention
Eased in the ground

Ebon staring
I hear whispers
Old ghosts telling
In an Autumn breath

Letter To An Old Neighbor

Francine Tolf

Mr. Borey, your tangled garden
of tiger lilies and bachelor buttons
is covered with cement now.
A turquoise Corvette squats on cinder blocks
where your sun room once beckoned,
with its mysterious clocks and birdcages.

The mulberry tree
that stained your sidewalk purple every July
was sawed down years ago.
Children swarmed over it,
our fingers and mouths black with its juice,
daring each other to dash to your porch,
punch your doorbell,
shout your name.

Mr. Borey, my mother's house of forty years
is for sale now.
She used to visit you
and brought me over one afternoon
when I was very small.
You made funny faces and slipped
me peppermints,
not at all the crazed old man
we later delighted in teasing,
shrieking with laughter
as you chased us with rake or broom,
never able to sweep your yard clean
of the children who collected in clusters
only to flutter away.

Middle aged men and women,
heavier now with memories and concerns
are all that remain
of those children, Mr. Borey,
who met secretly under porches
and saved apples for the lonely mare
who lived on the lot across from you.

They have scattered for good,
those graying boys and girls,
who snatched peace from an old man
and ran with it into the shadows
of his evergreens,
and tossed it to the summer wind, laughing.

Land of Scarves

Bill Yarrow

Old man, where is your right thumb?
In Odessa.

Where, old man, is your beard?
On my father's face.

Where is your father, old man?
Face down in the eldest earth, cluttered and holy, among the dreams of his only grandchild's son.

And where is your wife?
In the cemetery of the graceless, in the cemetery of the frightened.

What time says the clock in the blood?
The hands, it says, are swollen and will strike the fingers; the swollen hands will stroke the half-closed brilliance of the eyes; the tone will whisper what will not endure.

What will?
The hostile world, the earth of God.

Your breathing, is it hard?
No, I remember how, but I don't breathe breaths anymore, just memories now.

Untitled

Kim Vogen

We rode the bus together everyday to the junior high. That was where I met Anthony. He lived in my neighborhood and was two years older than I. He always had a girlfriend and a lot of friends. I had a crush on him. Why not? He was perfect in my eyes. He even had hearts pencilled onto his picture in the yearbook.

There was one night which made everything beforehand seem like an insignificant detail, pre-cursing the event. We were all swimming at a friend's pool. You know how it goes—Marco Polo and the whole bit. It was really a lot of fun. Afterwards, I was telling him how I had to leave, and that's when it happened. He offered to walk me home.

There was a cool breeze in the air, and he lent me his coat. We walked hand-in-hand for the block and a half to my house. When we got to my door, I felt like I would blow up. I was so consumed with excitement and trepidation. He leaned forward and kissed me; and there was the passion of two years withheld. I pulled him close and held him tight in my arms. When I let go, I saw a smile on his face.

He never asked for my number, and seeing as how he went onto night school, we never saw much of each other after that. At first, I missed him, but I learned to get by and eventually forget him. I found myself having boyfriends and hanging out with my friends, but none of those boyfriends ever seemed to be as real.

When I moved onto high school, we passed in the halls often sharing a hint of a smile or a quick glance. I didn't know any of his friends, and he knew none of mine. Come to think of it, we never really did. Maybe that was why we never worked out in junior high. His friends always gave him a hard time about me. Maybe it was because I was younger or because my friends weren't "cool enough;" but ya, maybe that had something to do with it.

Over time, we saw less and less of each other. Nothing was ever really resolved. When I heard about what happened, I didn't want to believe it. I didn't believe it.

I went to his wake and saw all those friends. The boys who used to call me names were all there with tears streaming down their faces. I was afraid. I walked up to the casket, and before I could see him, I saw pictures of him and little pieces of his life strewn all around. He had just graduated high school.

I looked onto him and had to pull back. All I could think of when I saw his swollen dead body was the time I held it and kissed it. He was still beautiful, but that wasn't him. All I remember is that I couldn't stop crying. And those friends of his began that night to treat me in a different way. I was no longer a little girl who stood between them but rather a woman respected for the piece of him she still held.

A couple days had passed, and I was still in a daze. I was lost somewhere in time back in junior high. I kissed those sweet lips which are now underground. I hadn't talked with him in years, but I had wanted to so badly. Why couldn't I have just spoken up? Why? Now it's too late.

But it wasn't too late—I went to sleep that night, and he came to me in a dream. I don't mean that I dreamt about him. I mean that he came to me in my dream. We were young again, having fun. We walked side-by-side, hand-in-hand. I was so happy, but then he gave me a serious look. We stopped, and he was looking into my eyes. He said, "I have to go now," and

turned to walk away, but I couldn't let go. He turned back and squeezed my hand. He said, "This time I really have to leave," and then I let go.

The Computer is On

Matt Furlane

Electrons fervently racing
through a rigid road course.
Bits and bytes frantically jumping
in and out of memory bins.
Ones and zeros, ones and zeros
Switches turning on and off at
the speed of light. Gates opening
closing, pulses streaming,
polarities flip flop,
electricity circulates,
light emitting diode blinks green.
The Computer is on.

Derek Hill's Poems

Snowman
You were sitting there
So perfect and still
As it got warmer
You grew ill

Cranberry
Hazel
Red
Indigo
Silver
Thistle
Maroon
Aqua blue
Sea green

Teal
Rose
Evergreen
Every color

Ice Age

Erica Gallagher

I want to be dead inside of my headphones
And my soul would seep into the distorted
Bar chords.
Just once I want to be flowing at
The same pace as the rivers current
A natural state of movement
Until I hit the dam
And the undertow sucks me below.
I want to be alive outside the cold world
If only I could heat it up somehow
By combusting before it
Causing warmth to spread across this frozen land.

Wordeater 99 Student Jury:
Nicolle Byrnside
Jeff Hicks
Bob Loewe
Gale Tolf

Awards
Prose ($5.00)
Cynthia Boyne, Kevin Davisson, Karen Henning, Jason Stone, Kim Vogen

Poetry ($5.00)
Erica Coffey, Matt Furlane, Erica Gallagher, Kirsten Honiotes, Steve Sievers

Cover Design ($20.00)
Michael Fletcher

John Stobart is solely responsible for the awards.

Submission Deadlines
Manuscript and cover designs
must be submitted to:
John Stobart, Room C-1069

by

March 4, 1998 - Wordeater 101
May 6, 1998 - Wordeater 102

Cover Designs submitted must be one inch margins all around.
Emphasize lines. Use india ink.

This issue contains selections from students, faculty, alumni and friends of Joliet Junior College. Only current students are eligible for awards.

EDITO